

## **News Release**

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## DGS wins Excellence in Virginia Government Award for Public Information for work on UCI bike race

~ Agency led Commonwealth's communications efforts for Road World Championships ~

Richmond, VA – The Department of General Services on Friday was presented the 2015 Excellence in Virginia Government Award for Public Information for its communication efforts in preparation for the UCI Road World Championships.

Sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Excellence in Virginia Government is an annual awards program that recognizes individuals or teams for their contributions to government and the Commonwealth's communities and citizens. The Department of General Services (DGS) was among seven Virginia individuals and organizations honored during an awards luncheon at the Richmond Marriott.

The DGS team, led by Director of Communications Dena Potter, was responsible for outreach to more than 100,000 employees statewide, including over 11,000 state employees in the downtown Richmond area who were directly impacted by the weeklong event. At the center of DGS' communications efforts was a website created for state employees, <a href="https://www.vabike2015.virginia.gov">www.vabike2015.virginia.gov</a>, complete with road closure maps, race course information, parking information, details about the event, ways to get involved and much more. DGS also hosted numerous general employee and agency-specific briefings; developed road closure maps and information sheets; engaged employees on social media; and developed periodic emails keeping employees informed, including daily updates during the race. In addition, DGS helped plan and publicize employee-only events, including the daily Employee Zone activities, special meet-and-greet sessions with Team USA cyclists and exclusive discounts for state employees.

"We knew going into this event that we couldn't shut down state government for a week. More importantly, we wanted our employees to look forward to being downtown for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We knew for that to happen we had to make sure they were well informed," said **Secretary of Administration Nancy Rodrigues**, who nominated DGS for the award. "The overwhelming response from state employees was that they were prepared and they enjoyed the bike race, and I'm pleased DGS is being recognized for their leadership in making that happen."

During the September races, state employees faced a unique challenge in that most of their office buildings and parking decks were fully encircled by the race courses each day. DGS worked closely with the event planners to guarantee access for state employees and the public and then communicated those plans effectively.

"The courses essentially placed our downtown Richmond state office buildings on an island each day during the races, and we knew state employees were anxious about how they would get to work and how this international event would impact them. Our belief was that if we gave them relevant, timely information to help them plan ahead we could turn any anxiety into excitement," **Potter said.** "We at DGS are grateful to our partners who helped make this an extraordinary event, and we're proud of the way the Commonwealth welcomed the world."

DGS worked closely with the Governor's Office, Richmond 2015, Richmond Police Department, Department of Human Resource Management, Capitol Police, Virginia Department of Transportation, and the Department of Motor Vehicles to plan and execute its communications strategy.

"We certainly could not have pulled off such a successful World Championships without the help of many partners, from private businesses to state and local government entities," said Tim Miller, Chief Operating Officer of Richmond 2015, the nonprofit organization responsible for developing and managing the event. "The Department of General Services was an outstanding partner from the beginning and really set the gold standard, working collaboratively with numerous partners and contributing greatly to the overall success of the event."

Former DGS Director James T. Roberts, who passed away earlier this year, also was recognized during the awards luncheon. Roberts worked for DGS from 2003 through 2006, and he also served as deputy Public Safety Secretary and deputy Secretary of Administration.

A full list of the 2015 Excellence in Virginia Government Awards winners can be found here: http://www.wilder.vcu.edu/news/evga2015-pr.html.